

VZCZCXRO4517
PP RUEHCHI RUEHDT RUEHHM
DE RUEHML #1230 0790655
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
P 200655Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY MANILA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0056
INFO RUEHZS/ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHEAST ASIAN NATIONS
RHHMUNA/CDRUSPACOM HONOLULU HI
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RUEAWJB/DEPT OF JUSTICE WASHINGTON DC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC

UNCLAS MANILA 001230

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR EAP/MTS, DRL/CRA, EAP/PD, DRL/PHD, G/TIP

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [SOCI](#) [RP](#)

SUBJECT: POSITIVE REACTION TO HUMAN RIGHTS REPORT ON
PHILIPPINES

¶1. (U) Summary: Mission's efforts to alert the Philippine public of the Country Reports on Human Rights 2005, including a chat on the Virtual Consulate Davao website, paid off with generally positive and constructive responses from the media and from key contacts. Mission will continue to develop project proposals focusing on ways to assist the Philippines make progress in key problem areas. End Summary.

¶2. (U) After submission to Congress of the Country Reports on Human Rights 2005, Mission issued a press release and posted the Philippines' section of the report on our website, with links to the full report on the main State Department website. On March 13, Mission held a successful Virtual Consulate Davao web-chat, where many participants (who had clearly read the report) posted questions about U.S. human rights policies and about U.S. technical assistance projects combating human rights abuses in the Philippines. Philippine Commission on Human Rights (CHR) Commissioner Dominador Calamba also participated, thus underscoring our commitment to working with local authorities on human rights. Mission also sent copies of the Philippines' section of the report to key contacts, including those in the government, Congress, and non-governmental organizations.

¶3. (U) Reaction from the press to the Philippines' report was largely favorable. Aside from articles on other sections of the report such as those on China and Iran, local headlines tended to focus on particular Philippine-related issues, such as, "U.S. Report Cites RP's Overcrowded, Harsh Jails" and, "RP Source, Destination of Human Traffic." These articles included specific information about those problems, while acknowledging that the Philippines had to improve its human rights record more generally. However, one editorial in a small circulation newspaper entitled, "Etiquette Lessons from Pol Pot," took the U.S. to task for criticizing harsh prison conditions in the Philippines while the U.S. "continues to violate human rights" in Guantanamo Bay and Abu Ghraib prisons. The editorial went on to claim that taking human rights lessons from the U.S. was "like learning good manners from Pol Pot."

¶4. (U) According to NGO contacts, the Philippines section was "thorough" in highlighting key human rights issues, including extra-judicial killings, prison overcrowding, child prisoners, etc. A legislator and his staff said that they had found the report very useful as a comprehensive "unbiased" reference tool that pinpointed where the GRP needed to make more progress. A contact at Malacanang Palace said he had found the report "constructive" and helpful for the government as "a road-map setting out where we need to focus our efforts."

¶5. (U) Comment: Mission will continue to develop project proposals focusing on ways further to assist the Philippines make progress in key areas, such as good governance and rule of law, labor conditions, human trafficking and women's rights.
Kenney